

# *Consultation and Coordination*

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## Scoping History

The National Park Service published a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement in the *Federal Register* on August 23, 1999 (V64-N162-P45979). The *Merced River Plan/FEIS* has been developed pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190) and the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1508.22). The intent of this planning process is to prepare a comprehensive management plan that encompasses protection and enhancement of the values for which the Merced River was designated as a Wild and Scenic River (16 USC 1271-1287). During this planning process, management alternatives have been developed which address resource protection, development of lands or facilities, user capacities, and various stewardship practices necessary or desirable to achieve the purposes of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended (16 USC 1274(d)). Through scoping and the public comment review process on the *Draft Merced River Plan/EIS*, the planning process is being conducted in consultation with affected federal agencies, State and local governments, tribal groups, and interested organizations and individuals.

The National Park Service invited American Indian tribes to participate in the formal scoping process, and held formal consultation meetings with the North Fork Mono Rancheria, the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, Inc. (Southern Sierra Miwok), and the Mono Lake Indian Community. These tribes are associated with lands and resources along the main stem and South Fork of the Merced River in Yosemite National Park.

The *Draft Merced River Plan/EIS* was prepared by the National Park Service pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The National Park Service completed the scoping phase through a concerted public involvement effort, including the following activities. An invitation letter initiating scoping and announcing four public meetings was mailed to over 8,500 individuals, organizations, agencies, and other entities during the week of June 7, 1999. On June 11, 1999 the National Park Service formally published the Merced River Plan scoping period in the *Federal Register* (V64-N112-P31605), accepting comments through July 14, 1999. In deference to public interest, the National Park Service on July 13, 1999 via direct mailing and news release issued a two-week extension of the scoping period through July 30, 1999. Formal notice of the extension appeared in the *Federal Register* on July 23, 1999 (V64-N141-P40037). Altogether six public meetings were held in the following locations: San Francisco (June 22), Modesto (June 23), Mariposa (June 24), Yosemite Valley (June 28), Wawona (July 7), and El Portal (July 12). In addition to direct mailing and the Internet posting, all meetings were publicized via news releases sent to over 110 media contacts on June 3 and July 1, 1999.

## Results of Scoping

As a result of the scoping effort, which elicited over 300 responses, it was determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (not an Environmental Assessment) would be prepared. All comments received during June 11-July 30 in response to the scoping and extension notices have been duly considered, and will remain in the administrative record throughout this planning process.

A summary and full report on the analysis of the public scoping comments are available to the public; these can be obtained via the contact information below. As a direct result of the public responses received, the following issues will be considered: recreational use; riparian habitat protection; private property in Wawona; the river boundaries; development in Yosemite Valley within the corridor; and air, water, and noise pollution, among others.

## Public Comment Period

A *Federal Register* notice and media announcements initiate the beginning of a formal public comment period on the draft plan and its environmental impact statement. All interested agencies, groups and individuals were invited to review the document and submit comments.

Public meetings on the draft plan were held in various locations throughout the state during the early weeks of the public comment period. The date, time, and location of each meeting were announced in the *Federal Register*, and through the regional/local media.

The comment period for the *Draft Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan/EIS* officially closed on March 24. Over 2,500 comments were received by mail, e-mail, fax, and at the 12 public hearings held throughout the state in February. The National Park Service received a spectrum of valuable comments from individuals throughout the nation, local residents, long-time Yosemite visitors, government agencies, and interested organizations.

Now that the comment period is closed, the Merced River planning team has reviewed and incorporated comments into this final *Merced River Plan/FEIS*. The Content Analysis Enterprise Team (CAET), a division of the U.S. Forest Service, assisted in the sorting and analysis of these comments. A broad range of issues surfaced during the public comment period. Some responses addressed concerns regarding the proposed boundaries, classifications, Outstandingly Remarkable Values, and the River Protection Overlay. Other public comments included suggestions for changes to the management zones to respond to camping, parking, boating, and other river management-related issues. Respondents also requested that the National Park Service provide more specific research and monitoring guidelines in the *Merced River Plan*.

# Coordination

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 USC 1531 et seq.) requires all federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by the agency does not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or critical habitat. A *Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement* was sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on August 20, 1999. On September 9, 1999, project staff met with a representative from the Sacramento office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided a draft letter listing species of concern, based on USGS 7.5-minute quadrangles that encompass the immediate project area, as well as a summary list. A final, augmented list was provided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service a week later (USFWS 1999) and included all of the lands potentially affected by the proposed action. Staff wildlife and vegetation specialists used this list as a foundation for endangered species analysis summarized in this plan.

The National Park Service prepared a Biological Assessment in accordance with Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, and implementing regulations (19 USC 1536[c], 50 CFR 402.14[c]), National Environmental Policy Act requirements (USC 4332[2][c]), and direction provided in the 1988 *National Park Service Management Policies* (4:11). The Biological Assessment was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for official review and comment in January 2000. A Final Biological Assessment based on the final *Merced River Plan/FEIS* was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in June 2000. Copies of the Biological Assessment are on file at Yosemite National Park.

An overriding assumption of the Biological Assessment was that each site-specific action that could occur under the proposed action would be analyzed as required by the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act and that all federal laws would be complied with during implementation. Since the decision made under this EIS is programmatic, no specific commitment of resources is made by the decision. Therefore, a Biological Evaluation and/or Biological Assessment would be made for all site-specific projects, as warranted. Some site-specific projects have the potential to adversely affect threatened or endangered species. Therefore, site/project-specific assessments and determinations, in accordance with the provisions of the Endangered Species Act and in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, could be required for future actions.

## California State Historic Preservation Officer

The National Park Service conducted consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. This consultation, which was done according to the National Park Service's 1999 Programmatic Agreement for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, includes letters dated October 19, 1999, February 7, 2000, and March 20, 2000 to the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that provide the determination by the National Park

Service that the selection of a *Merced River Plan* would have no effect on properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The California State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with this determination on March 29, 2000.

## Future Information

In mid-June, the final *Merced River Plan/FEIS* will be released, presenting a range of alternatives revised from the original draft plan. Following a 30-day required period of “no action,” the Pacific West Regional Director of the National Park Service will select an alternative that will be signed as a Record of Decision (ROD).

Updated information about various aspects of the Merced River planning process will be periodically distributed via newsletters, mailings, the Yosemite National Park web site ([www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning)), and regional and local news media. To request placement on the planning mailing list or to receive a copy of the *Merced River Plan*, leave a name and address on the voice mail telephone at 209/372-0261. Interested individuals, organizations, and agencies may also respond to:

Superintendent  
Attn: Merced River Plan  
P.O. Box 577  
Yosemite National Park, CA 95389

Or e-mail  
[Yose\\_Planning@nps.gov](mailto:Yose_Planning@nps.gov)

# List of Agencies, Organizations, Businesses, and Individuals that Received the Draft Merced River Plan/EIS

## **Federal Agencies**

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

Boise Interagency Fire Center

Inyo National Forest

Missoula Fire Science Lab

Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station

Sierra National Forest

Stanislaus National Forest

Toiyabe National Forest

Department of Defense, Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Health and Human Services

Public Health Service

Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management, Folsom, California Office

Bureau of Reclamation, Sacramento Office

U.S. Geological Survey, Menlo Park, California Office

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento Regional Office

Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Sacramento

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, San Francisco Regional Office

U.S. Postal Service, Yosemite National Park

## **Members of Congress**

Senator Barbara Boxer

Senator Diane Feinstein

Representative George Radanovich

Representative John T. Doolittle

Representative George Miller

## **State Agencies**

Office of Planning and Research, State Clearing House

Department of Fish and Game

Department of Justice, Attorney General

Department of Parks and Recreation

Office of Historic Preservation

Resources Agency of California  
American Indian Heritage Commission  
California Department of Transportation

## **American Indian Tribes**

American Indian Council, Mariposa County  
Bridgeport Paiute Indian Colony  
Coarsegold Chuckchansi  
Mono Lake Indian Community  
North Fork Mono Indian Museum  
North Fork Mono Rancheria  
Tuolumne Mewuk Rancheria

## **County and Local Governments**

Madera County  
Board of Supervisors  
    Planning Director  
    Air Pollution Control District  
Mariposa County  
    Board of Supervisors  
    Planning Department  
    Air Pollution Control District  
    Sheriff  
    Housing and Community Development  
    Unified School District  
Mariposa Chamber of Commerce  
Mono County  
    Board of Supervisors  
    Mammoth Lakes Visitor Bureau  
Tuolumne County  
    Board of Supervisors  
    Planning Commission  
    Community Development Department  
    Air Pollution Control District  
Sheriff  
    Visitor Bureau- Groveland  
Merced County  
    Association of Governments  
    Board of Supervisors  
    Planning Commission

## Organizations and Businesses

Access Fund  
American Whitewater  
The Ansel Adams Gallery  
California Trout  
California Wilderness Coalition  
Central Sierra Planning Council  
Chapman Associates  
El Portal Chevron  
El Portal Market  
Earth Island Institute  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Environment Now  
Friends of the Earth  
Friends of the River  
Friends of Yosemite  
Highway 120 Association  
Leigh, Scott, and Cleary  
Mariposans for Environmentally Responsible Growth  
Mendocino Environmental Association  
National Audubon Society  
National Parks and Conservation Association  
National Office  
National Trust for Historic Preservation, California Office  
Southwest and California Region Offices  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
National Tour Association  
Planning and Conservation League  
Save-the-Redwoods League  
Service Employee International Union, Local 752  
Sierra Club  
    Loma Prieta Chapter  
Merced Group  
National Office  
Tehipite Chapter  
Tuolumne Group  
Yosemite Task Force  
Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund  
Sierra Recreation Association  
Southern Yosemite Visitor's Bureau  
Trust for Public Land

Tuolumne River Preservation Trust  
VIA Adventures  
Wawona Area Properties Owners Association  
The Wilderness Society  
    California/Nevada Region  
    National Office  
Yosemite Action  
Yosemite Area Audubon  
Yosemite Association  
Yosemite Bug Hostel  
Yosemite Concession Services  
Yosemite Fund  
Yosemite Institute  
Yosemite Medical Group  
Yosemite National Park Society  
Yosemite Restoration Trust  
Yosemite Valley Railroad Company  
Yosemite West

## **Libraries**

Alameda County, Main Branch  
Contra Costa County, Concord Branch  
Groveland  
Los Angeles City, Central Branch  
Marin County, Main Branch  
Mariposa, including El Portal Branch  
Oakhurst  
Sacramento County, Central Branch  
San Bernardino County, Main Branch  
San Diego City, Main Branch  
San Francisco City, Main Branch  
San Jose City, Main Branch  
San Mateo County, References Section  
University of California at Berkeley, Main Library  
University of California at Davis, Shields Library  
University of California at Los Angeles, University Research Library  
Yosemite National Park Research Library



## **Newspapers**

*Associated Press*  
*Bakersfield Californian*  
*Contra Costa Times*  
*Fresno Bee*  
*Los Angeles Times*  
*Mariposa Gazette*  
*Merced Sun-Star*  
*Oakland Tribune*  
*San Francisco Chronicle*  
*San Francisco Examiner*  
*San Jose Mercury News*  
*Sierra Star*  
*The Modesto Bee*  
*The Sacramento Bee*

## **Radio**

KCBS AM – San Francisco  
KFBK – Sacramento  
KFIV – Modesto  
KGO AM – San Francisco  
KMJ – Fresno  
KMPH – Fresno  
KQED – San Francisco  
Plus local radio stations

## **Television**

KRON – San Francisco  
KTVU – Oakland  
KXTV – Sacramento  
NBC Network News – Los Angeles

The names of individuals receiving the draft document are available upon request.